

128 of the access port 120, during periods in which the dialysis process is suspended, the flow of blood 132 into the access port 120 is prevented. Additionally, since the length L_2 of the plug body 110 is substantially equal to the length L_1 of the access port 120, stagnant blood (not shown) will not remain in the lumen 128 nor will residual debris accumulate therein.

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please replace Claim 1 with the following amended claim:

Sub C4

1. (Amended) An apparatus for facilitating vascular access comprising:
a) a vascular access port defining an elongated tubular body of predetermined length with a central lumen having opposed proximal and distal end portions, the distal end portion adapted and configured for introduction into a blood vessel; and
b) an elongated cylindrical plug body dimensioned and configured for insertion into the central lumen of the vascular access port and ready removal therefrom to permit access to the blood vessel, the plug body having a length that is substantially equal to the length of the vascular access port so as to prevent blood flow into the lumen of the access port when the plug is engaged therein.

Sub C5

Please add the following new Claims 25-33:

A3

25. (New) An apparatus for facilitating vascular access comprising:
a) a vascular access port defining an elongated tubular body of predetermined length with a central lumen having opposed proximal and distal end

portions, the distal end portion adapted and configured for introduction into a blood vessel;

- b) an elongated cylindrical plug body dimensioned and configured for insertion into the central lumen of the vascular access port, the plug body having a length that is substantially equal to the length of the vascular access port so as to prevent blood flow into the lumen of the access port when the plug is engaged therein; and
- c) a locking mechanism associated with the proximal end of the elongated cylindrical plug body for releasably coupling the plug body to the vascular access port.

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26. (New) An apparatus as recited in Claim 25, wherein a handle portion is associated with a proximal end of the elongated cylindrical plug body to facilitate installation and removal of the plug body.

27. (New) An apparatus as recited in Claim 26, wherein the plug body, handle portion and locking mechanism are formed monolithically.

28. (New) An apparatus as recited in Claim 26, wherein the plug body, handle portion and locking mechanism are integral with one another.

29. (New) An apparatus as recited in Claim 25, wherein the elongated cylindrical plug body has an outer diameter that is substantially equal to an inside diameter of the lumen of the vascular access port.

30. (New) An apparatus as recited in Claim 26, wherein the handle portion extends radially outward from an outer diameter of the plug body.

31. (New) An apparatus as recited in Claim 25, wherein the locking mechanism comprises means for sealingly engaging the vascular access port.

32. (New) An apparatus as recited in Claim 34, wherein the locking means comprises helical threads.

33. (New) An apparatus as recited in Claim 25, wherein the elongated cylindrical plug body has a central core to increase flexibility of the plug body.

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